



**nurse  
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## Mobility and wheelchairs

“Most children who suffer an ABI will have to use a wheelchair at some point. This may just be for a short time after hospital or rehabilitation although every so often someone might have to use a wheelchair for longer or for the rest of their life.

Adjusting to life after an ABI can be tricky and upsetting. This can sometimes be made harder by the changes in your body that stop you from doing the things you used to be able to.

Not everyone has to use a wheelchair for a long period of time. It all depends on what part of the brain you hurt and how the brain is learning to adjust.

- **The frontal lobe controls your movement:** If you have hurt this part of the brain you may find it hard to move your arms and legs and walk properly.
- **The cerebellum controls your balance:** If you hurt this part of the brain you may find it hard to walk in a straight line or you may feel like you are falling. This can stop you walking. See the section on Ataxia.
- **Spinal cord injury can prevent messages from the brain getting to the body:** If your spinal cord has been very badly damaged you might not be able to walk at all. In this case you would have to use a wheelchair for life.
- **Being in bed for a long time can make the muscles in our legs weak:** If this happens you may need to sit in a wheelchair for a time and have physiotherapy to make your leg muscles strong again. You can then start to walk slowly with help.

Using a wheelchair can have lots of different effects on you and different people feel differently about using one. Remember, any feelings you feel are right for you. If you are worried, talk to your nurse or family. Maybe you feel:

- **Frustration** – at not being able to walk
- **Happy** – that you are out of bed and can move about with help
- **Impatience** – that you want physiotherapy to end so you can start to walk for yourself again
- **Worried about being labelled** – perhaps you think sitting in a wheelchair makes you uncool or you think people will stare. That's normal to worry about too





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You might not have to use a wheelchair for long but, if you do, try not to worry too much about what people will think. People's attitudes to wheelchairs are getting better and a lot of public buildings and attractions, like cinemas and theme parks, have been designed with the wheelchair user in mind.

You should also bear in mind that there are lots of positive role models that use wheelchairs and have been very successful people. You can still do lots of sports and activities with a wheelchair. There is an Olympic wheelchair basketball team, and dozens of people in wheelchairs do the London Marathon every year.

